HOT DOG SLICER

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention generally relates to a device for slicing wieners thereby enhancing the appearance of the hot dog and reducing the size of the bite-size portions.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The hot dog is eaten in almost every household and in many public events. It is one of the main food offerings in many entertainment activities such as baseball, for example. Often characterized as an "American tradition", the hot dog is a staple food product at picnics, sporting events, and campouts.

One of the concerns related to hot dogs or other cylindrical food products is the diameter and/or size of a normal bite-size piece. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recognizes that hot dogs or other round firm foods present common choking hazards. The August 1999 issue of *Child Magazine* indicates that hot dogs are among the top ten foods most likely to cause choking in children. Additionally, it is estimated that 78% of choking injuries occur in children under four years old, according to studies completed at the Dupont Hospital for Children in Wilmington, Delaware. Oftentimes infants or young children simply do not grind or chew their food well and they may attempt to swallow it whole. The AAP therefore recommends that these types of foods be cut or chopped to reduce the bite size, and, that they be consumed by infants and young children under adult supervision.

It is also well recognized that children may be finicky eaters. It therefore would be an improvement in the art to provide a utensil that not only quickly slices the food product to reduce choking hazards, but also forms a shape attractive to young children.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a device for slicing sausage or cylindrically shaped food or meat products such as hot dogs, bratwurst, sausage, and the like.

One object of the present invention is to improve the appearance of the meat of food product thereby increasing the eating enjoyment for children or sports fans. The preferred embodiments, for example, slice hot dogs into a shape that resembles an octopus.

Another object of the present invention is to enhance the safety of the food product by reducing the chewable size of the portions of the meat product. Additionally, the firm and round dimensions of the meat product are substantially eliminated. Potential choking hazards are therefore minimized.

Accordingly, a cylindrically shaped hollow body containing an internal plurality of blades is provided. The food product is inserted into the cylinder and then sliced by linear movement of the blades over at least a portion of the length of the cylinder. Alternatively, the blades may be fixed across the diameter of the cylinder whereby forcing the food or meat product past the blades results in the same cut to the meat. The resulting food product exhibits uniformly sliced portions of the cylindrical food product having approximately equivalent dimensions.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

Fig. 1 is a front view of a first embodiment of the present invention.
Fig. 2 is an iso view of the first embodiment of the present invention.
Fig. 3 is a top view of the first embodiment of the present invention.
Fig. 4 is a front view of a bottom portion of the first embodiment.
Fig. 5 is an iso view of the bottom portion of the first embodiment.
Fig. 6 is a top view of the bottom portion of the first embodiment.

Fig. 7 is an iso view of a plurality of blades of the first embodiment.

Fig. 8 is a top view of the plurality of blades of the first embodiment.

Fig. 9 is an iso view of a pin holder of the first embodiment.

Fig. 10 is a top view of the pin holder of the first embodiment.

Fig. 11 is a front view of a second embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 12 is an iso view of the second embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 13 is a top view of the second embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 14 is a front view of a bottom portion of the second embodiment.

Fig. 15 is an iso view of the bottom portion of the second embodiment.

Fig. 16 is a top view of the bottom portion of the second embodiment.

Fig. 17 is a front view of a top portion of the second embodiment.

Fig. 18 is an iso view of the top portion of the second embodiment.

Fig. 19 is a top view of the top portion of the second embodiment.

Figs. 20-23 are various views of eyeglass shaped food holders associated with the second embodiment.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT(S)

As shown in Figs. 1-10, a first embodiment 10 contains a hollow body 12 having an inner wall 13 and an outer wall 15, and, an open first end 14 and a closed second end 16. The body 12 is preferably cylindrical to accommodate the cylindrical shape of the food product, thereby reducing the need for a food holding means within the body 12. The body 12 also contains a plurality of grooves 18 preferably equidistantly spaced about the circumference of the body 12, and longitudinally extending from the first end 14 to points preferably equidistantly terminating above the second end 16. The body 12 also contains an inner cross-sectional area 20 for containment of the food product, and, an outer cross-sectional area 22 that as explained below,

cooperates with a blade rack of a first embodiment of the invention. The body 12 is fixed upon a base 24, wherein a longitudinal axis 26 of the body 12 passes centrally and perpendicularly through the base 24. A pin holder 28 is inserted at the termination of the grooves 18. In a preferred embodiment, a pair of prongs 30 is integral to the pin holder 28 and inwardly extends from the outer circumference 22 through two of the grooves 18. A plurality of blades 32 is initially disposed at the first end 14 of the body 12. It should be appreciated that although preferred, the pin holder 28 and the prongs 30 may be omitted from the design if desired. In that case, once the food product is cut, the body 12 is simply inverted to remove the food product from the open end 14.

As shown in Figs. 7 and 8, a blade holder 34 contains two handles 36. A circular rack 38 is integrally disposed between the handles 36. The plurality of blades 32, or otherwise stated as a plurality of wires, are fixed (e.g. wrapped) about the rack 38 so that the wires are equidistantly spaced about the rack 38. Stated another way, the blades 32 are equidistantly spaced about the rack 38 thereby establishing the same, or about the same, arcuate distances established by the grooves 18 about the body 12.

Therefore, as shown in Fig. 2, each radial blade of the plurality of blades 32 individually corresponds to and fits within a respective groove of the plurality of grooves 18. As also shown in Fig. 2, the rack 38 approximates a circumference slightly greater than the circumference 22, and during operation thereby slideably engages the outer surface of the body 12.

In operation, the meat product is placed within the body 12. The prongs 30 of the pin holder 28 are then inserted through two of the grooves 18 and into the meat product. The plurality of blades 32 is then positioned at the first end 14. The user then grips the handles 36 and pushes downwardly through the meat and through the entire length of the grooves 18. The plurality of blades 32 are then removed by retracting the blades upwardly and through the first end 14. The pin holder 28 is then grasped and moved in the same direction thereby removing the meat product from the body 12.

As shown in Figs. 11-19, a second embodiment 42 contains an upper portion 44 and a lower portion 46. The lower portion contains a body 48 having an inner wall 49 and an outer wall 51, and, an open first end 50 and a closed second end 52. A plurality of grooves 54 extends from the first end 50 to points preferably equidistantly terminating above the second end 52. A plurality of blades 55 is disposed within an upper region of the body 48. As shown in Fig. 16, the blades 55 are equidistantly fixed to the inner wall 49 and/or to the open end 50. As also shown, the blades 55 extend across multiple radii of the cylindrical body 48, thereby preferably forming a plurality of pie-shaped regions equal in area. A base 62 is fixed to the body 48 at the second end 52, wherein an axis 60 passes centrally and perpendicularly therethrough.

The upper portion 44 contains a meat holder or food receptacle 66 and a plurality of arms 68 integral thereto, thereby functioning to hold the meat or food product as it is sliced.

In operation, the meat product is placed within the meat holder 66. The meat holder 66 and the arms 68 are then placed over the first end 50 of the lower portion 46. The meat product is then driven down through the blades 55, resulting in a meat product having a plurality of cut portions having an equivalent or closely equivalent volumetric shape. Once the food product is sliced as desired, the food or meat holder 66 is then moved upwardly from the second end 52 or toward the first end 50 while gripping an uncut portion of the food. The resultant sliced food product is thereby removed from the lower portion 46 and again through the blades 55.

Stated another way, a food slicer 10 of the present invention contains a hollow body 12 having an inner wall 13 defining an interior 17 and an outer wall 15 for containment of a food product therein. A plurality of blades 32 extends across the interior 17 of the body thereby cutting a food product 19 biased against the blades 32.

The components of the present invention are generally made from plastic, metal, or other suitably rigid materials. The parts therefore may be molded or stamped, or by other methods known in the art. For example, the hollow body may be molded if plastic, or die cast if made from metal. The blade rack may be molded if plastic or stamped if made from metal. The blades may be molded if plastic and then sharpened by grinding, for example. Or, the blades may be stamped and sharpened if necessary when made from metal. If made from metal wire, the blades may simply be extruded to form wire in fine to course diameters, 1/128 to 1/16 inch diameters for example only, depending on design requirements.

While specific embodiments have been described in detail in the foregoing detailed description and illustrated in the accompanying drawings, those with ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that various modifications and alternatives to those details could be developed in light of the overall teachings of the disclosure. For example, the present invention may be used to slice vegetables or fruit, as well as meat. Or, the number of blades may be increased or decreased to alter the size and number of cut portions of the product being sliced. Accordingly, the particular arrangements disclosed are meant to be illustrative only and not limiting as to the scope of the invention, which is to be given the full breadth of any claims that are derivable from the description herein, and any and all equivalents thereof.